

Wycombe W. O., Walton and H. 1

WALTON AND HERSHAM clinched the Premier Midweek Floodlight League title at Loakes Park last night (Monday) for the third time in the last four years with a rough and ragged performance to end any hopes Wycombe Wanderers might have had of an Isthmian League-Premier Midweek League double.

It was a disappointing night for the Blues fans who saw their team, first buffeted and then locked out in their bid to hang on to the trophy they won last year when in a clash against Leatherhead, there were ugly scenes at Loakes Park, when the crowd vented their anger on the referee.

The scene was similar this year when a group of about 50 fans followed referee D. R. Drewitt (Haywards Heath) off the field voicing their feelings in no uncertain terms. Thankfully there was no violence.

They had a fair case too. Referee Drewitt failed to assert his authority on the game and as a result there was a glut of fouls, so many in fact, that one would have needed an automatic adding machine to count them. Thankfully both sides calmed down after the half-time break but two Walton players found their names in the referee's book—Roger Connell in the first half and Gerry Cooper in the second.

Throughout the first half the referee's whistle punctuated

By Stuart Earp

events with Walton's fouls often leading to retaliation from Wycombe.

It was Walton, who will be meeting Wycombe in the Isthmian League next term, who had the run of the early play. Brian Langfield 'drove' the ball into the side-netting after 16 minutes after Paul Fuschillo had failed to clear the bobbing ball. The hard ground made ball control difficult and this wasn't helped when rain began to fall in the second half.

When attacking, however, Walton left gaps in mid-field and Ted Powell and Barry Baker were constantly in action picking up possession. Both players, though, fell away in the second period.

The tension of a season's football began to show in the first half when goalkeeper John Maskell was involved in a flare-up with Langfield, who ended up on the turf. After consulting his linesman, however, the referee awarded a free kick to Wycombe.

Wycombe lined up without Larry Pritchard, and John Delaney (both injured) and were devoid of shooting until 31 minutes. Then it was full-back Charlie Gale who sent a drive over the bar.

Just prior to half-time John Maskell, who had been harassed mainly by Roger Connell every time he took a goal kick, had to be restrained by colleague Vince Faulkner as Connell fouled him. Not before time referee Drewitt produced his book and inserted Connell's name.

The rough-house tactics of the first half died down in the second and Wanderers came out looking for a quick goal. They forced two corners and generally looked like Isthmian champions. Unfortunately it was the only time in the match they did so.

It took a penalty to break the deadlock after 58 minutes when Rundle brought down Connell inside the penalty area. Walton's top scorer John Grondona made no mistake.

Wycombe's best chance of an equaliser fell to Tony Horseman, who was given a perfect through ball by Keith Searle but

he ballooned the ball over with only Dave Cobb to beat.

Although the absence of John Delaney in the back four was obviously missed, Ian Rundle and Vince Faulkner often kept Wanderers' hopes alive with some spirited defending.

As the half progressed, Wycombe committed themselves to attack and consequently left gaps in defence and Walton should have sewn up the game after 84 minutes, but Maskell came out well to save Keiron Somers's drive.

In the last five minutes Wanderers went all out for the equaliser but end of season fatigue was very much in evidence as passes went uncharacteristically astray and chances went untaken.

It was a sad end to the season for Wycombe and it was not the first time this season that they had come unstuck against a side that seldom allowed them to play the football they are so capable of.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell, P. Fuschillo, C. Gale, E. Powell, V. Faulkner, I. Rundle, B. Bremer, B. Baker, K. Searle, A. Horseman, J. Hutchinson. Sub.: G. Anthony (not used).

WALTON AND HERSHAM: D. Cobb, G. DeAth, D. Worby, D. Donaldson, W. Edwards, D. Bassett, G. Cooper, K. Somers, B. Langfield (Sub. G. Goode, 80 mins.), J. Grondona, R. Connell.

Referee: D. R. Drewitt (Haywards Heath).

Goalscorer: J. Grondona (Walton and Hersham), 58 mins. (pen.).